Fowl
Feathered
Review
№ 240

ISSUE № 240:
A Complete Outfit
With All the Necessary Parts

About the Assemblage

The FFR is no longer a journal or even a "Necrosign." It's a shared frequency—specifically the sound of a 1988 Mitsubishi Mirage idling in a parking lot at 3:00 AM. We don't curate; we just leave the back door unlocked. We are a collection of "important locals"—those who are durable because we are too tired to be fragile. If the work feels like it's trying to be "Art," we will likely use it to level a wobbly table.

The Staff (The Custodians of the Sink)

- Virgil Kay: Still the Final Arbiter, currently preoccupied with the aerodynamics of a falling bagel.
- Silent Bill: Promoted to *Chief of Tactical Non-Sequiturs*. He handles the "Necessary Pauses" by simply walking out of the room mid-sentence.

- Unkie Bob: Now specializing in *Casual Entropy*. He doesn't sabotage the structure anymore; he just forgets to tighten the bolts.
- The Unnamed Dishwasher: (Not on the masthead). He just crashed in. He's wearing a windbreaker. He's currently scrubbing a scorched pot with the intensity of a man performing heart surgery. Don't look at him. He's the soul of the operation now.

THE PERPETUAL PENDING PLEDGE:

The Review is not for sale; it is freely given. All incoming funds are Sacramental Offerings consecrated not for service rendered, but to sustain the metabolically necessary Obsession8888. Our official registry is no longer numeric; it is an unassailable frequency defined as Vi · ∞ · 432Hz.

SUBMISSION PROTOCOL (CASUAL MODE)

1. The Work: Send us 2 to 953 fragments. They can be poems, paintings, or transcriptions of overheard arguments about bowling.
2. The Presentation: No "Cover Letters" listing your awards. We don't care where

you went to school; we care if you can stand up after taking a hit. Tell us your favorite type of industrial fastener instead.

3. The Offering: The Perpetual Pending Pledge remains. It's still free. But if you must send something, send a 12-inch sandwich.
    - The Kewpie Clause: If there is no Kewpie Mayonnaise on the sandwich, Virgil will use your manuscript to wipe the counter. Kewpie is the only thing standing between us and the "Absolute Cosmic-Cluck."
4. The Delivery: Drop it off. Or don't. The auction is never over, and we're just waiting for the next honk.

Note: If you hear the sound of dishes clattering in the back, ignore it. It's just the frequency of the house.

- Digital Park and Ride: Send to fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com
- **Physical Park and Ride: 250.50∞ State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401.** *ERRATUM: If the 432Hz frequency sounds more like a rattling heat shield on a compact car, do not adjust your ears. The rattling is the poetry. The 9-volt battery is dead. Long live the 9-volt battery.*

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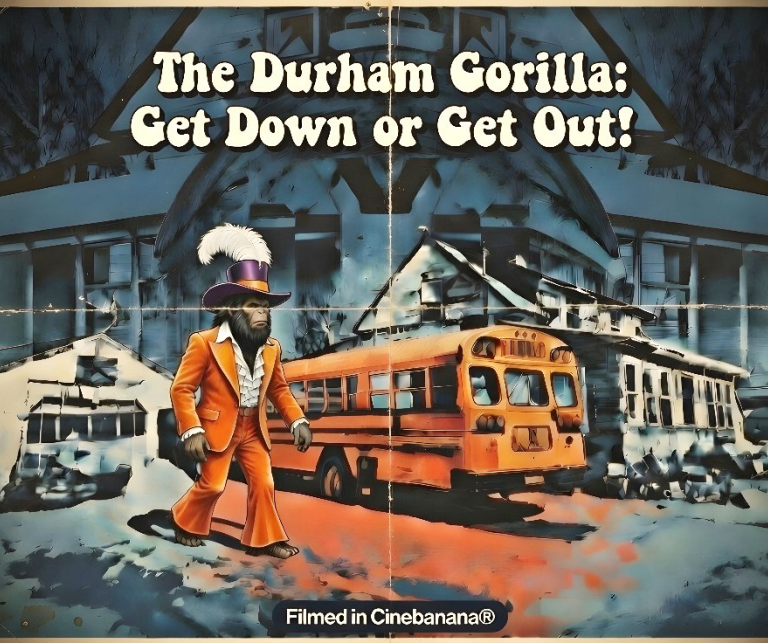
The Durham Gorilla:
Get Down or Get Out!
Filmed in Cinebanana®

The Durham Gorilla: Get Down or Get Out!

A Backwoods Mythic Procedural (1976)

By Klein Gladstone

In the winter circular distributed in Durham in February of 1973, there appears a line, slightly misaligned, reporting that a "gorilla-sized man" had been seen detaining prowlers near Runaround Pond. The ink at the word *gorilla* feathers outward, as though the stencil had absorbed too much pressure from the drum. No correction was ever issued. It is difficult now to determine whether the term was metaphor, exaggeration, or the accidental inauguration of a legend; what matters is that the phrase remained, and that in remaining it offered the town a vocabulary for a form of enforcement not easily housed within its official structures.

The film later titled *The Durham Gorilla: Get Down or Get Out!* does not so much dramatize this event as metabolize it. Shot on visibly grainy stock and assembled with techniques that never disguise their seams, it stages the emergence of a figure known simply as DG — a tall man in a powder-blue leisure suit who appears whenever livestock vanish, heating oil is

siphoned, or rumors of shapeshifting trespassers drift across frozen fields. By day he moves through feed stores and municipal offices with the unhurried courtesy of a clerk; by night, or at the moment of confrontation, he executes a transformation that is achieved not through cinematic polish but through a hard, unapologetic cut, revealing beneath the suit a set of wrestling regalia whose theatricality signals not spectacle but jurisdiction.

The visible splice is essential. Authority here is not presented as natural; it is assembled. The jump cut performs what the town itself must perform — the conversion of rumor into procedure.

DG's sled team, filmed with a patience bordering on reverence, is explicitly said to descend from the line of Togo, the famed lead dog of Leonhard Seppala, who spent his final years in Poland Spring. This is not decorative genealogical trivia. It situates the film within a documented regional history of winter travel and canine labor, allowing the pursuit sequences — DG upright on the runners, breath rising in steady plumes — to resonate as archival continuity rather than fantasy embellishment. The sled replaces the patrol car not to romanticize the past but to recall a time when mobility itself required partnership with the landscape.

The cases unfold with procedural restraint. A moss-limbed impostor exploiting tourists by posing as a regional Bigfoot analogue. A long-armed figure siphoning heating oil from tanks along Route 136. A consortium of minor cryptids manipulating blizzard forecasts to inflate plowing contracts. Each episode defines a problem, assembles evidence, secures compliance, and restores a precarious equilibrium. The structure is disciplined; the tone, measured. DG does not annihilate his adversaries. He negotiates with them in a language rendered onscreen as a series of low clicks and wind-tones, subtitled in block lettering that flickers slightly out of sync. Translation is depicted as labor — halting, imperfect, necessary.

Particularly striking is the so-called "gravity hold," achieved through optical printer layering that suspends a lunging cryptid mid-frame. The matte lines shimmer; the edges refuse invisibility. Rather than presenting force as overwhelming domination, the effect reads as superimposition — myth laid over motion, containment without erasure. The creature is not destroyed; it is paused, held within the field of law long enough for terms to be articulated. One senses here an intuition that eradication solves little, whereas negotiated suspension preserves both order and memory.

To dismiss the film as regional camp would be to overlook the care with which its episodes map infrastructural anxiety. The monsters exploit precisely those weaknesses that bureaucratic systems struggle to address quickly: energy supply, licensing, contract oversight. The legend of the Durham Gorilla emerges, then, as a supplementary mechanism — a figure who embodies immediacy when official channels appear delayed or abstract. He reads rights not only to humans but to beings whose existence is otherwise denied; he insists on documentation even at the edge of the woods. In doing so, he dramatizes a community's effort to reconcile folklore with governance, wilderness with ordinance.

The final sequence, set during a whiteout along the Androscoggin, stages a confrontation not with a singular villain but with a coalition of grievances — creatures who claim that zoning, extraction, and neglect have rendered them desperate. DG, backlit by snow glare, does not deliver a climactic blow. He proposes terms. The storm subsides not because myth has triumphed over modernity, but because both have been compelled into uneasy articulation. The last image — sled dogs cresting a ridge toward Bangor, the frame freezing just before descent — resists triumph. It offers continuation.

If one listens closely, beneath the analog hiss, the film advances no slogan. It advances a method: define the problem precisely; present the strongest opposing claim; answer with evidence; leave the seam visible. The tradition stands — sled dogs, winter roads, communal rumor — but the method interrogates, insisting that preservation occurs not by freezing the past but by engaging it under present strain. That the transmission flickers only heighten the sense that what survives has been earned.

SWIMMING TIDE

THE GULL AUDITOR OF MILBRIDGE

By Ashley Hobart

Fog roll. Off the bay. 4:47 a.m.
Creosote stink from the wharf pilings (treated 1974, the year the sardine plant closed for the third time).
Cassette deck click—the mechanical punch of RECORD and PLAY pressed simultaneously, a sound that costs two AA batteries, Rayovac, gas station checkout, $4.79 after tax.

Eleanor Whitcomb—Silent Ellie to the four year-round residents of Petit Manan Point who still spoke her name, that strupid lunatic to the summer people who'd tried exactly once to ask about her "project"—sat on the BP oil bucket (stamped 1987, repurposed, bleached by salt air to the color of old teeth) with the Sony TCM-200DV propped on her knee.
Gulls.

Herring gulls, specifically. Larus argentatus. The voice of God's own collection agency.

She didn't move. The fog did the moving. Her hands—chapped, the skin around the thumbnail split from pulling bait bags—rested on denim that had been

Wranglers in 2011 and were now mostly salt and prayers.
"They're screaming about the bill again," Fred Higgins had said last Thursday, pulling traps off the stern of the Maggie D (named for his sister, who left for New Hampshire in '03 and worked dental billing now, sent a postcard once, never visited).
Fred didn't get it.
The gulls weren't screaming.
They were accounting.

Left voice (immediate/percussive):
Tourist in a fleece vest: "What are you recording?"

Right voice (systemic/historical):
The Petit Manan Point seasonal rental market, 2008–present: $1,200/week July–August, $400/week September, $0/week October–May, which meant the year-rounders paid the difference in property tax adjustments and road maintenance they'd never see.

Rear voice (internal/predictive):
Ellie knew what happened when you answered questions. You got committees. You got grants. You got a feature in *Down East* magazine and then you got evicted because your landlord realized he could Airbnb your winterized camp for $180 a night.
The tape spooled.

Gull voices layered: the ascending shriek (where's my cut), the staccato bark (you said you'd pay), the long descending moan (I'm still waiting, I'm still here, I'm still owed).

Maggie Dunn—Fred's sister, the one who'd left—had asked once, years ago, before she understood enough to stop asking: "Why do you hate people so much?"
Ellie had been pulling rockweed off a trawl line. Hadn't looked up.
"I don't."
Pause. The tide pulling back.
"I just like things that send bills they can't be blamed for."

Fred understood that part, at least. He brought her coffee sometimes—gas station, two sugars, the cup already leaking through the seam—and didn't stay. Didn't ask about the tapes. Didn't ask why she had forty-seven of them labeled by date and tide and wind direction, stacked in a milk crate in the unheated back room of the rental camp she'd been in since 2009 (month-to-month, landlord in Massachusetts, never increased the rent because he forgot she existed, which was the only miracle she'd ever trusted).

The gulls banked.

Ellsworth was seventy-three miles north. Bangor, eighty-four. Far enough that their gravity didn't pull, close enough that their runoff—economic, chemical, spiritual—rolled downhill and pooled here, in Milbridge, in the bay, in the birds.

Left voice:
The cassette counter clicking forward: 127, 128, 129.
Right voice:
The lobster license lottery, 2007: Fred's nephew got a permit. Fred's nephew sold it for $15,000 to a buyer from Portland who worked two weeks a year and wrote it off as "heritage experience."

Rear voice:
Ellie had stopped talking in 2012. Not officially. Not dramatically. Just—fewer words per year until the math worked out to silence. It wasn't a protest. It was accounting.
The fog thickened.
The tape ran.

A gull landed on the piling six feet away—yellow eye, trash beak, the white and gray of something assembled from bleached invoices and overdue notices—and shrieked.

Ellie didn't flinch.

She knew this voice. Catalogue number: MM-PMP-040923-0447-HG-03. Herring gull, adult, male, probably. This one always started before five. This one had a descending third interval that sounded like a landlord realizing you'd read the lease.
The gull shrieked again.
Ellie's thumb hovered over STOP.

The tape warbled—just once—a brief drag in the mechanism, the faint elastic wobble of aging belt against capstan.
Didn't press it.

Let it record. Let the ribbon pull the voice into the plastic shell, the magnetic stripe, the archive no one had asked for and no institution would preserve because there was no grant language for women who sit in fog and treat gulls like depositions.

Fred's boat motor—distant, outboard, the 2003 Yamaha 50hp he'd rebuilt four times—coughed across the water.

Ellie turned her head. Not far. Just enough.

The Maggie D slid through the fog, a shape more heard than seen, the throttle low, Fred's silhouette at the stern

like a question mark that had stopped expecting punctuation.
He didn't wave.
She didn't wave.
This was the conversation.
The tape clicked.
End of Side A.

Ellie pressed STOP. Pressed EJECT. The cassette rose like a piece of evidence.
She pulled it out, turned it over, seated Side B, pressed RECORD and PLAY again.
The gulls were still talking.
She was still billing.

Left voice:
Maggie on the phone, 2019: "You should come up for Thanksgiving."

Right voice:
Ellie's oil bill, February 2020: $487. Her checking account: $512.
Rear voice:
The thing about silence is it's the only thing you can't be taxed on. Yet.

The fog brightened the way a debt brightens when you stop pretending it isn't there.

Ellie sat.
The bucket held.
The tape turned.

The gulls sent their invoices into the March air, each cry a line item, each pause a payment plan, each wingbeat the flutter of a check that would never clear. And somewhere up the coast—Ellsworth, Brewer, Bangor—the tourists were waking in mail-order bedframes, brewing coffee in rentals that used to be someone's year-round, planning their day trips to "authentic" Maine, which meant anywhere the Wi-Fi still worked and the locals had already been priced into the interior.

But here—
Here on the point—
The audit continued.
The tape rolled.

And Silent Ellie Whitcomb, age unknown (probably fifty-three, possibly sixty, definitely old enough to remember when you could live here on a waitressing job and a wood stove), sat on a bucket worth nothing and recorded the sound of everything that couldn't be forgiven.

Calvin, Winter 1983

Someone Else's Movie

By One Size, Zinemeister of the Tree Streets

The record arrives degraded, like thermal paper left too long in a glove compartment. Enough legible data remains to reconstruct the sequence; not enough to pretend it was ever clean.

No overt sermonizing. No ornamental thunder.

All pulse is structural.

The tradition stands. The method interrogates.

But now: the transmission may be unstable. Authorities may overlap. Footnotes may flicker against lived experience.

What survives must feel earned.

The projection starts at 11:07 p.m., right when the last patient inside the Penobscot Sleep Center is supposed to be hitting REM.

The building is a low brick box built in 1974, the year the Pacer rolled off the line. Corner of State and Birch, two blocks up from the river, one block down from the abandoned Hollywood Casino parking garage. The wall chosen for the screen is the north face — blank, no windows, just a faded mural of Paul Bunyan that someone half-assedly painted over in beige in 2009. The paint has since blistered in long vertical strips, so the giant lumberjack's eye still peers through like he's watching from inside the wall.

The projector is a 16mm Bell & Howell 1592, late-sixties model, the one with the green hammerite finish and the aircraft-aluminum take-up reel that sounds like a coffee grinder

when it spins. It's bolted to the bed of a rusted 1989 GMC Sonoma parked sideways across two handicapped spaces on Birch Street. Extension cords snake out the passenger window, across the sidewalk, and into the back door of the shuttered RadioShack next door — someone is still paying the electric bill, apparently. The projector beam hits the wall forty feet wide, soft at the corners because the lens is a cheap Wollensak that has never quite been collimated right.

Every citation carries weight. Every claim has a funding source. Every shimmer invoices someone.

The prose does not declaim. It reasons — even when the line drops.

The film itself: *Another Girl, Another Planet,* shot on the Fisher Price PXL2000 in 1992 by

Michael Almereyda. Pure liquid pixelvision — black-and-white, 110×90 resolution, audio recorded on compact cassette through a single condenser mic that always sounded like it was inside someone's mouth. The tape was transferred to 16mm sometime in 1994; the print has been circulating underground ever since. This particular copy is third- or fourth-generation, vinegar syndrome just beginning at the edges, so every so often the image puckers and breathes. The grain is the size of dimes. The contrast is brutal: faces either blow out into white holes or sink into tar. When the characters kiss, their mouths smear into single black voids.

Classical texts are not museum artifacts. They are arguments awaiting re-examination.

Union Street still climbs at a grade the current code would not approve. The hill predates the regulations; the asphalt remembers. Rectangular patches of newer gray interrupt the older surface — a visible history of

compliance reports and budget cycles, each repair a footnote disagreeing with the paragraph beneath it. Heat shimmers off the slope although it is March and the Penobscot, a few blocks away, still holds ice. A gull steps onto the head of a parking meter that has not taken coins since the Obama years, tests it as if for purchase, then leaves.

No ticket. No receipt.

Ground the essay in primary sources. Quote precisely. Define terminology. Then: apply comparison. Historicize categories. Distinguish text from inference. Tone: confident, never shrill. The reader is an intelligent partner, not a pupil awaiting correction.

On the north face of the sleep clinic, the PXL2000's pixels are large enough that the

grain is structural rather than incidental — each pixel a discrete square of value, like a mosaic whose tesserae are too large for the image they're attempting. Paul Bunyan's ghost-eye stares out through the blistered beige paint at the lower left corner of the projected frame, a second watching presence beneath the film's own watching. The beam holds both: the lumberjack's surviving eye and the pixelvision image of a woman standing in a New York kitchen that the camera can only approximate, rendering her in the vocabulary of a surveillance system that has forgotten what it was surveilling.

Occasionally juxtapose a medieval ruling with a contemporary dilemma without smoothing the seam. Let the tension show.

Religion without history becomes abstraction. History without philosophy becomes

chronology. Philosophy without language becomes fog.

Every serious essay links at least two planes: Concept. Text. Context. Consequence.

Only then does the worker enter.

The Mirage idles at the curb. Three cylinders keep time — an audible reluctance to commit to arrival or departure. Killing the ignition would turn the moment into a decision. Leaving it running defers choice. Engine agrees: ticking like a clerk counting staples.

I step out.

Shirt-jacket, plaid, lined, still holds yesterday's fog in its fibers. A short beard catches a crosswind that smells of diesel and old pine. Yellow-tinted lenses flatten the late-night street into something like an overused photocopy: contrast reduced, edges soft, still adequate for filing.

A Penobscot County Sheriff cruiser rolls slow down State Street, spotlight sweeping once across the projection, catching the GMC's cracked windshield and the silhouette of the projectionist — hood up, cigarette ember floating like a red pixel. The cruiser pauses, idles, then moves on. Nothing in the manual about 16mm art crimes.

Under analog conditions, these planes may overlap imperfectly. A quotation may land half a beat late. Context may surface after argument begins. The friction is instructive.

Inside the sleep clinic, the overnight tech — name tag says MARLA — steps out the side door for a smoke and stops dead. On the wall above her, the actress Jennifer McNamara is saying, in that warped PXL cassette baritone, I keep dreaming I'm in someone else's movie. Marla watches for a full minute, cigarette

burning down untouched, then goes back inside without a word. Later she'll log it as "possible hypnagogic projection from patient room 4," because that's easier than explaining.

Allow one historical voice to interrupt another without full transition. Let a classical jurist's line echo beneath a contemporary citation. System noise through drywall.

Define the mas'alah precisely. Present the strongest opposing view — no caricatures. Then respond: Dalīl — evidence. Taʿlīl — causal explanation.

The problem, as it presents itself, is obstructive rather than abstract.

Halfway through the reel, the Pacer appears.

Not in the film. In real life.

It turns onto Birch from Harlow, matte black paint drinking the streetlights. Make and model are not in dispute: AMC Pacer, a 1970s experiment in visibility and curvature, built the same year as the building it now idles beside. The factory design already suggested a greenhouse on wheels. This specimen is a third-order text: original, revision, and commentary layered without apology. The paint, once the industrial green enthusiasts call "vomit" without malice, has been overlaid in matte black. Across this ground, gold filigree curls in patterns that hover between arabesque and custom pinstripe — not quite mosque, not quite muscle car.

On the roof, two miniature spires rise — gothic in outline, limestone in color, but more likely foam or fabricated stone anchored through the sheet metal. Where one would expect crosses, thin iron rods bend into crescents. The radio antenna has been persuaded into the rough geometry of a minaret. The result is not harmonious; that is

the point. The car stands at an unsanded seam where English neo-Gothic, Islamic silhouette, and American automotive design collide without resolution.

The driver kills the headlights and coasts to the curb directly opposite the projection. Engine off. Doors stay closed.

On the wall, the film's protagonist is walking through a night that looks exactly like this one — grainy, hopeless, beautiful.

If the prose begins to glow with moral heat, cool it with documentation. If it grows sterile, insert a human implication. The car does not resolve its own contradictions. Neither should the essay.

Quote selectively. Explain technical vocabulary. Note manuscript variants if

relevant. Separate what the text says from what we wish it said.

The door on the driver's side opens. A figure descends.

Platform boots add more height than the body supplies. Their buckles have the heavy, rectangular seriousness one associates with liturgical hardware. A black velvet coat trails past the ankles, its hemline collecting road salt and granular dirt the way incense coals collect ash. The face above the collar is pale, narrow, powdered toward theatrical white. Large, round, smoked lenses turn the eyes into dark, reflective disks. Black hair, oiled and tightly arranged, disappears under a pillbox hat pinned with a single peacock feather that registers every motion as a small, involuntary tremor.

She does not speak. She passes through the projector beam on her way to the passenger side. The barbs of the peacock feather separate and catch pixelvision light individually before

she clears the beam and the wall reassembles: the New York stairwell, the two registers of grain, Paul Bunyan's persistent eye.

She points, once, toward the passenger-side door: a summons, not a greeting.

I circle the car. Open the opposite door.

The interior no longer corresponds to any dealer brochure. The rear seat has been removed. In its place, bolted low across the floor, a narrow workbench runs side to side. On it rest two lithographic limestones, each roughly the size of a legal pad, resting on felt. Greasy black drawings are visible under the pale veil of gum arabic that fixes the stone. Beside them: a small hand-press, its rollers wrapped in stained cheesecloth, and a trim stack of dampened rag paper whose edges have already begun to cockle.

A man reclines along what remains of the cargo area, now upholstered in faded crimson damask. His robe is the color of dried blood; his slippers catch light in silver thread. Long white hair spills past his shoulders with the fluidity of something decanted. The face is narrow and pale, its amusement held just short of irony. The eyes are the washed amber of weak tea, but they are not tired.

He raises his hand. Several rings flash: carnelian, onyx, one setting conspicuously empty where a stone used to be.

On the wall, the film finds a window. The woman stands in front of it and the city behind her is a field of blooming white rectangles, each light source expanded by the PXL2000's inability to contain it into a soft square of pure value. She is a silhouette against these blooms. Her outline is legible; her face is not. The

16mm grain sits on top of the pixel structure and gives her edges a fine fur of silver. She could be from any decade that had windows and cities and cameras that could not quite hold what they were pointed at.

"You are the one they call One Size," he says. The accent began in England, passed through class performance, and has been left to age. "The printer of small heresies. The one who feeds thermal ghosts to crows."

The narrator does not answer immediately. He leans against the doorframe and lets the outside air — cold, metallic, carrying diesel and faint acetate — braid with the vehicle's interior atmosphere, dense with warm stone dust, linseed oil, oud, toner, and old paper. The seam does not disappear; it braids.

Left voice: If he knows your radius of distribution, the asymmetry is already in his favor.

Right voice: Or the opposite. Knowledge suggests commission, not surveillance.

Rear voice: Names are invitations to witness. He is calling you to a role.

"I am writing in Urdu," he says. "A continuation. Vathek did not end; he only paused. The halls of Eblis are not yet full."

Here the textual layer intrudes.
Vathek, the late eighteenth-century "Oriental tale" associated with William Beckford, concludes with the Caliph condemned to perpetual consciousness in the subterranean halls of Eblis, heart aflame, unable to repent. The punishment is eternal stasis, not closure.

The tale was written in French by an Englishman performing Orientalism from inside a self-constructed abbey. It was translated into English before it appeared in its original language in print. Every layer of its transmission performed authority through mistranslation.

In this car, on this corner, that unfinishedness migrates into another language, another script, another century.

He lifts a sheaf of pages. The script moves right-to-left in flowing nastaʿlīq, each word curving into the next like vines advancing over masonry that is itself still settling.

"Vathek builds higher this time," he continues. "Not a tower of brick and hubris — a tower of images. Stones that remember what paper forgets."

He taps the lithographic blocks.

“Stone, grease, acid, water, patience. Then the press. Then the damp sheet. Then the pull.”

The edition, he says, is limited to twenty-seven impressions.

“Why me?” I ask.

“Because you understand fugitive ink,” he answers. “You print on thermal until it fades. You offer your work to crows, not to ledgers.”

He hands over a proof.

The rag paper is still damp; it cools the fingers before it gives up its image. The print is clean and exact: Vathek reaching toward a talisman shaped unmistakably as a car key — a late-twentieth-century latchkey. Within the key’s bow, rendered as negative space, the faint

outline of the AMC logo appears. Just visible, like a watermark that has passed through too many generations of copying and retains only the rumor of its authority.

The world of the problem precedes your ownership of it.

The scholar enters late. Not as hero. As worker.

I fold the sheet once, then again. Slip it inside the shirt-jacket.

The film ends at 12:43 a.m.

The screen goes white, then dark. The shutter keeps slapping for three more seconds before the projectionist kills the lamp. The take-up

reel decelerates into silence. The extension cords slacken.

The Pacer starts up — low burble — and pulls away without lights. The spires catch the last of the projector's cooling glow and hold it for one heartbeat. Then State Street receives them.

The wall is blank again.

Paul Bunyan's ghost-eye stares out through the blistered paint.

Never conclude triumphantly. End with a clarified problem.

I return to the Mirage. The small thermal printer on the passenger seat has already warmed to standby.

The proof feeds in.

Heat passes over the paper in a narrow, even bar — the machine's version of dampened stone and inked roller. The Urdu begins to ghost.

Lines blur at their extremities first. Curves soften. Fine terminal strokes refuse to appear at all. The dense blacks translate into gray, then into near-blank, then into the cream of the stock itself.

Something resolves in the output tray.
Not words.

Eyes.

They persist where the text should be: black, sharply defined against a ground already committed to disappearance. The medieval debate about whether attributes inhere in matter or pass through it without remainder does not resolve the image. Neither does

contemporary semiotics. Both arrive. Neither arrives first.

The paper cools.

The eyes fade more slowly than the script that surrounded them.

Somewhere downstream, a crow finds a strip of thermal paper curling in the gutter near the Penobscot's edge. The eyes still hold long enough to recognize themselves in the river's black mirror before the chemistry completes its work. The crow steps back. The current takes the paper. The ice receives it briefly, then lets it go.

The problem remains open: which medium, in this exchange, is actually more fugitive.

The thermal printer cycles back to standby.

The ready lamp resumes its patient interval.

Preserve by engaging.

Interrogate without severing.

Let the archive breathe — even if the signal flickers.

Under Glass

By E. D. Dexter

A hyper teen
and a six-year-old boy
negotiate a table

Fixed points disjoint
ed

A comfortable chair

The hyper teen
asks through the glass window:
"Change the channel."
"Turn up the volume."

The guard says:
"Don't move the table."
"Don't go to your room."
"Don't play with the blankets."

The six-year-old boy cries.

The guard and the nurse laugh.

The Big Bang Theory plays.
It's the Bollywood episode.
A favorite of the hyper teen.

Tears, swearing, bulletproof glass.
Hollywood meets Bollywood.
Tuesday night.

The Bibliographic Perimeter

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